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RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4723  
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/13/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BL](#)  
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION POLITICIAN PHYSICALLY ATTACKS  
INDIGENOUS LEADER

REF: LA PAZ 1877

Classified By: Ambassador Philip S. Goldberg for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) On July 10, Adolfo Chavez, president of the Confederation of Indigenous and Original Peoples of Bolivia (CIDOB, an umbrella group of lowland indigenous groups, see reftel) was attacked by Podemos assembly member Fernando Morales. Chavez had flown in to Sucre and was stopped in the airport by a news crew, who asked him why he was flying when his group, including children and the elderly, were marching to Sucre in the bitter cold to support indigenous autonomy. During the incident, the reporter also asked why Chavez was traveling with a Cuban and a Venezuelan. As Chavez began to answer, Morales approached from behind, insulted Chavez, and then struck him at least twice (the assault was caught on camera.) The Bolivian Information Agency immediately ran coverage describing how Chavez was "brutally beaten" by Morales and reportedly hospitalized.

¶2. (C) While the attack itself was disturbing to watch and miscalculated as a political ploy (if Morales in fact planned the event), the repercussions of Podemos' lack of action after the attack are more significant. Several political analysts have approached Emboffs to say that Podemos leader Tuto Quiroga has to date made a grave error in not immediately expelling Morales from the party. Quiroga has privately said that he cannot afford to lose Morales' vote in the Assembly. But the continued non-punishment of a politician who looks at best violent and at worst violently racist could have serious repercussions for Podemos. In a country where the majority of voters identify themselves as indigenous, being seen as a racist anti-indigenous party is not a good survival strategy. (Comment: Post expects the ruling MAS party to fully take advantage of this incident. It is simply too good a publicity weapon to ignore. End comment.)  
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